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Aischylos *Eumenides* 858–66

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The acquittal of Orestes in *Eumenides* is followed by an epirrhematic exchange in which the chorus of Erinyes, robbed of their prey, turn their anger against the city whose representatives have (they believe) deprived them of their power and prestige. In answer to the choral songs of menace and complaint, Athene utters four speeches in iambic trimeters. The third and longest of these (848–69) presents problems of structure, scale and content which have led either to deletion of 858–66 or to somewhat desperate attempts at defence. However, discussion has been cursory. The aim of the present paper is to discuss the problems presented by lines 858–66 in some detail, and to argue that the third speech as presented by the tradition is not only the work of Aischylos but is also an integral and important part of the development and resolution of the problem of the administration of justice which the Erinyes represent. For convenience I reproduce here the whole of the speech:[1]

ὀργὰς ξυνοίσω σοι· γεραιτέρα γὰρ εἶ,
καὶ τῶι μὲν εἶ σὺ κάρτ' ἐμοῦ σοφωτέρα,
φρονεῖν δὲ κἀμοὶ Ζεὺς ἔδωκεν οὐ κακῶς. 850
ὑμεῖς δ' ἐς ἀλλόφυλον ἐλθοῦσαι χθόνα
γῆς τῆσδ' ἐρασθήσεσθε. προυννέπω τάδε·
οὐπιρρέων γὰρ τιμιώτερος χρόνος
ἔσται πολίταις τοῖσδε, καὶ σὺ τιμίαν
ἕδραν ἔχουσα πρὸς δόμοις Ἐρεχθέως 855
τεύξηι παρ' ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικείων στόλων
ὅσ' ἂν παρ' ἄλλων οὔποτ' ἂν σχέθοις βροτῶν.
σὺ δ' ἐν τόποισι τοῖς ἐμοῖσι μὴ βάλης
μήθ' αἱματηρὰς θηγάνας, σπλάγχνων βλάβας
νέων, ἀοίνοις ἐμμανεῖς θυμώμασιν, 860
μήτ' ἐκζέουσ' ὡς καρδίαν ἀλεκτόρων
ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἀστοῖσιν ἰδρύσηις Ἄρη
ἐμφύλιόν τε καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους θρασύν.

[1] In 861 the MSS have ἐξελοῦσ', which is exceedingly flat and does not make sense of the scholiast's gloss ἀναπτερώσασα; I accept Musgrave's ἐκζέουσ', which gives acceptable sense in context, explains the scholiast's gloss, and is palaeographically plausible. See Thomson's note in W. G. Headlam and G. Thomson, *The Oresteia of Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1938) II 308 f.

θυραῖος ἔστω πόλεμος, οὐ μόλις παρών,
ἐν ὧι τις ἔσται δεινὸς εὐκλείας ἔρως· 865
ἐνοικίου δ' ὄρνιθος οὐ λέγω μάχην.
τοιαῦθ' ἑλέσθαι σοι πάρεστιν ἐξ ἐμοῦ,
εὖ δρῶσαν, εὖ πάσχουσαν, εὖ τιμωμένην
χώρας μετασχεῖν τῆσδε θεοφιλεστάτης.

The problems, as presented succinctly by Dodds,[2] are as follows: i) if lines 858–66 are omitted, Athene's speeches to the chorus assume a roughly uniform length, 14 lines (794–807), 13 (824–36), 13 (848–57, 867–69), 11 (881–91);[3] ii) τοιαῦτα in 867 looks back to the privileges promised in lines 854–57, ten lines before, a remarkable interval; iii) the Erinyes have made no explicit reference to civil war, and yet that is what Athene takes them to be threatening. These difficulties have been met in two ways. A number of scholars over the last century have simply deleted the verses in question as an interpolation, thus solving the problems at a single stroke.[4] An alternative solution, proposed by Dodds and accepted recently by Sommerstein,[5] is to regard the problematic passage as an interpolation by Aischylos himself: "the poet himself . . . at some moment when the threat of civil war had grown acute inserted [the verses] into an already completed draft."

Before considering the merits of these solutions, we should first note a fact which has gone unremarked. In Athene's other three speeches there is an explicit request not to damage Athens alongside promises of honours to the Erinyes (deprecation of damage 800–03, 830–32, 888–89, promise of honours 804–07, 833–36, 890–91). This balance between the speeches is clearly intentional. It demands a request not to cause damage in the speech which begins in 848 alongside the promise of honours in 854–57. We cannot solve this problem by excising 861–66 and retaining 858–60, for quite apart from the presence of μήθ' in 859, which calls for an answering particle, lines 858–60 clearly envisage a danger which consists in incitement to violence. If the passage is intrusive, probably we are dealing not with

[2] E. R. Dodds, *PCPhS* 6 (1960) 23 f. (= *The Ancient Concept of Progress* [Oxford 1973] 51 f.).

[3] Cf. also 903–15 (strictly outside the epirrhematic sequence), 13 lines.

[4] N. Wecklein, *Aeschyli Fabulae* (Berlin 1885) 458 says of the verses in question: "hoc loco alieni videntur," and more fully in *Äschylos Orestie* (Leipzig 1888) 311: "Die V. [858–66] unterbrechen den Zusammenhang. Die stark hervortretende politische Tendenze und der manierte Stil kennzeichnen sie als Interpolation." The verses are also rejected by J. F. Davies, *The Eumenides of Aeschylus* (Dublin 1885), and suspected by O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977) 407 n. 1 and C. W. MacLeod, *JHS* 102 (1982) 130. H. Weil, *Aeschyli Tragoediae* (Leipzig 1884) transposed 858–66 to follow 912. But it makes no sense for Athene to answer a question from the chorus concerning the benefits to be prayed for (902) with (in part) a prolonged request not to cause destruction; the request is anyway otiose after 900, where the Erinyes explicitly abandon their anger.

[5] Dodds (above, note 2), A. H. Sommerstein, *Aeschylus Eumenides* (Cambridge 1989) 251 f.

simple insertion but with the replacement of at least two or three trimeters urging the Erinyes not to blight Athens with a lengthy request that they should not cause civil war.

It may perhaps be felt that such a substitution would come more naturally from Aischylos himself than from an actor–writer (or a scribe incorporating a passage from the margin of his exemplar) who was apparently influenced by considerations neither of length nor of appropriateness of context, and who might therefore be expected merely to append a passage on civil war to a reference to physical blight rather than substitute the former for the latter.[6] This is however the most that can be said in favour of Dodds' solution. There is much to be said against it. Firstly, there is the fact that the play elsewhere shows a desire for political stability.[7] Though surprising in its context, the passage is not so isolated in the play as a whole that we should look for a separate explanation; indeed, the presence of other passages urging stability argues strongly against the need for a hurried insertion of the sort envisaged by Dodds. Secondly, other contemporary political references in the play[8] arise naturally from the dramatic situation, irrespective of any reference to the world outside the play, while the passage in question as viewed by Dodds is inserted in defiance of the dramatic context. The contrast with lines 976 ff. is particularly illuminating in this regard. There we have a prayer averting stasis in the context of a number of prayers for the well-being of Athens; the prayer is entirely at one with its context. It is striking that the parallels for the supposed procedure adduced by Sommerstein are from comedy, a genre which readily responds to contemporary events irrespective of the

[6] In favour of Aischylos as author Sommerstein (previous note) argues: "[the lines] were written at a time when (a) there was a serious danger of civil war and (b) an abundance of external war could be regarded as a blessing (cf. 864). Both these conditions were satisfied in 458 B.C." As to the second point, external conflict would *at any period* be preferable to civil war (cf. MacLeod [above, note 4]; incidentally, Sommerstein assumes that the ambiguous οὐ μόλις παρών in 864 means μηδὲ μόλις παρέστω, "let there be no lack," but it could mean ὃς οὐ μόλις πάρεστι, "of which there is no lack"). The first point is highly subjective. We do not in fact know that there was a grave risk of civil war in the spring of 458. There was certainly an oligarchic plot at the time of the battle of Tanagra (Thuc. 1. 107. 4–5), but if A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford 1945) I 412 is correct to place the Tanagra campaign at the end of 458/7, the plot postdates the play by a year. Of course, the atmosphere in spring 458 *may* have been tense. But we do not know this, and we certainly cannot assume it. Violent reaction to the reform of the Areiopagos had been limited to the assassination of the democrat Ephialtes. A contemporary might well feel that the reforms had been carried through with a remarkable lack of violence and see this as evidence of the inherent stability of Athenian society. In view of the optimistic close of the play it is at least as easy to see in *Eumenides* a celebration of Athens' capacity for peaceful change as it is to see anxiety in the face of political uncertainty.

[7] Cf. 526–39, 696 ff., 976 ff.

[8] Specifically the Argive alliance 289–91, 669 ff., 762 ff. and the founding of the Areiopagos 681–707. For a general discussion with some bibliographical data (to which add Sommerstein [above, note 5] 25 ff., A. J. Podlecki, *Aeschylus Eumenides* [Warminster 1989] 17 ff.) see D. J. Conacher, *Aeschylus' Oresteia: A Literary Commentary* (Toronto 1987) 197 ff.

demands of the immediate context. It would moreover have been easy enough for Aischylos to insert a reference to civil war in the Erinyes' songs of rage in order to achieve an obvious harmony between Athene's speech and its surroundings. Finally, Dodds' suggestion rests on an unverifiable conjecture, that at the time of the Dionysia of 458 the political situation had suddenly become critical. We cannot rule out this possibility absolutely, but clearly an interpretation which relies on guesswork starts at a disadvantage. It appears therefore that the choice lies between deletion and an interpretation which seeks to solve the problems with reference to the immediate context of Athene's speech and the broader context of the dramatic situation.

I turn therefore to the problems summarized by Dodds. Firstly, the questions of scale. At *Pers.* 256–89, *Th.* 203–44, 686–711, *Suppl.* 736–63 and *Ag.* 1072–1113 the trimeter utterances in epirrhematic exchange are exactly equal in number; at *Ag.* 1407–47 the trimeter speeches are of nearly equal length (14, 17); likewise the herald's trimeters in the sequence at *Suppl.* 866 ff. (3, 3, 2, 2). We might therefore expect the speeches of Athene in the epirrhematic exchange in *Eumenides* to be at least roughly equal. However, at *Suppl.* 348–417 we have an epirrhematic exchange in which the trimeter utterances are all exactly equal with the exception of the last, 407–17 (the figures are 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 11). The aim there is clearly to create a climax as the king articulates fully the imperative presented by the chorus' role as suppliants. In *Eumenides* likewise one might expect any dislocation in the balance of speeches to come at the end, but one possible reason for dwelling at length on the danger in the penultimate speech of the sequence is a desire to articulate most vividly (by the juxtaposition of Athene's most sustained attempt at persuasion with a choral response in 870 ff. which as before reiterates verbatim complaints already uttered) the apparent insolubility of the crisis and intractability of the Erinyes in preparation for their sudden capitulation after Athene's final speech in 881 ff. Also relevant perhaps (though not in an epirrhematic sequence) is *Cho.* 315–404, in which choral anapaests three times follow a run of three lyric stanzas; the anapaestic utterances consist of 5, 8 and 5 verses (340–44, 372–79, 400–04).[9] Thus the imbalance is neither unique in Aischylos nor inexplicable.

The second problem, the interval which separates τοιαῦτα from its antecedent, rests on the assumption that τοιαῦτ' looks back only to 854–57. However, this is by no means certain. εὖ δρῶσαν in 868 has more point if it takes up the request to refrain from inciting violence (858–63), in which case τοιαῦτ' vaguely resumes both request and promise.[10] If τοιαῦτ'

[9] I owe this reference to Dr. A. F. Garvie.

[10] I owe this point to Dr. Malcolm Campbell. There is a close parallel at *Eum.* 480–81, where τοιαῦτα resumes both the imperative presented by Orestes' position as suppliant (473–74) and the menace presented by the chorus (476–79); because the second of these is developed at

looks back only to the promise of 854 ff. εὖ δρῶσαν has no point of reference within the speech, for there is no hint in 854 ff. of any benefit the Erinyes can bestow in return; but we expect 868–69 to resume points already made in the speech. If we accept for the sake of argument that τοιαῦτ' looks back only to 854 ff., one obvious solution to the problem is to transpose lines 867–69 to follow 857. This would be linguistically unexceptionable. Though retrospective τοιοῦτος is commonly used by Aischylos in closing summary at or near the end of a speech (as e.g. *Ag.* 315, 348, 580, *Eum.* 197, 638, 913), it is also used simply to round off a section within a speech (as e.g. *Ag.* 593, *Eum.* 480, *Pers.* 823, *Th.* 195, 279, 384, 590). However, this solves one problem by creating another. As presented by the manuscripts all Athene's speeches in this epirrhematic sequence end with promises of honours for the Erinyes. This parallelism is destroyed if the closing lines of her penultimate speech are transposed, and the rhetorical force of the speech itself is weakened, for the purpose of the parallelism is to end each speech with an appeal to the self-interest of the Erinyes which simultaneously reinforces her claim that they have not been dishonoured. It is indeed unusual in Aischylos for retrospective τοιοῦτος not to follow its antecedent immediately as common sense dictates. However, at *Eum.* 912 τοιαῦτα looks back not to the preceding line but to 904–10.[11] The interval between 857 and 867 is of course far greater, and if 867 stood alone a reference to honours described ten lines before would be intolerably obscure. However, since the content of 854–57 is resumed in εὖ πάσχουσαν κτλ. (868–69) there is in fact no real obscurity.

The third problem is the most serious. The Erinyes have spoken of their destructive influence as a poison drop (σταλαγμόν 783, 813) which creates a wasting disease (λειχήν 785, 815) destroying vegetable and human life (785–87, 815–17). One naturally supposes from this description that the menace presented by the Erinyes is purely physical,[12] especially given the similarity to the effects of the plague in Sophokles' *OT* 26 ff., 168 ff. Furthermore, lines 938 ff., in which the Erinyes pray for fertility, make more sense as a reversal of their earlier attitude if their threats included physical corruption of life in Attica. Yet Athene clearly sees a threat of civil war. Either Athene is correct or the passage is alien to its context. But if Athene is correct, the poison of the Erinyes is not only physical but psychological, corrupting the minds of men as well as their bodies and their crops, and the description of the drops issuing from the Erinyes has both a literal and a metaphorical aspect. The country will become depopulated and

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some length, τοιαῦτα is expanded in 480–81 (cf. 868–69), which resumes the whole sequence 473–79.

[11] Another such postponement perhaps is 638, which (if referring to Klytaimestra) must look back to 635. However, in view of the textual uncertainty both in 638 and its immediate context its value as corroborative evidence is limited. The same is true of τοιάδε at *Cho.* 1005.

[12] At *Cho.* 1058, *Eum.* 54 the drops from the eyes of the Erinyes are literal.

infertile not only because human and plant growth will wither but also because civil war will cause widespread death and the abandonment of agriculture.[13] There are in fact a number of arguments which may be advanced in support of this view.

Firstly, in the epirrhematic exchange which follows the conversion of the Erinyes they offer prayers averting stasis (856, 976 ff.). Although those verses offer an acceptable sense if we suppose merely that the chorus prays for civil concord as part of a general benediction upon the state (as at *Suppl.* 679 ff.), they gain considerably in effect if the chorus is transforming an earlier curse into a blessing. This is what the textual tradition offers in lines 858 ff. This view of the relationship between those two passages receives support from the other blessings for which the chorus prays in 921–26 and 937–47, which contrast with the threat in 780–87, 810–17 and Athene's words in 801–02. Athene's comment on their prayers for blessing (988 f.) underlines the reversal in their attitude (contrast 830). If the second strophe and antistrophe in the following exchange like the first strophe and antistrophe reverse earlier threats, the result is a more pointed contrast between the attitudes of the chorus before and after they are persuaded by Athene.

Secondly, there are a number of expressions in the general context which hint at a certain ambiguity in the malign effects of the Erinyes. At 476–79 Athene, anticipating the wrath of the Erinyes if they are balked of their prey, says:

> αὗται δ' ἔχουσι μοῖραν οὐκ εὐπέμπελον,
> καὶ μὴ τυχοῦσαι πράγματος νικηφόρου,
> χωρεῖ μεταῦθις ἰὸς ἐκ φρονημάτων
> πέδοι πεσὼν ἄφερτος, αἰανὴς νόσος.

At 782–83 (812–13) the poison is described as καρδίας σταλαγμόν. Neither description suggests a literal discharge of poisonous drops. Athene in urging them to do no harm in 829–31 says:

> σὺ δ' εὐπιθὴς ἐμοὶ
> γλώσσης ματαίας μὴ 'κβάλῃς ἔπη χθονί,
> καρπὸν φέροντα πάντα μὴ πράσσειν καλῶς.

ἔπη does not suggest a direct, physical infusion of poison. All of these expressions can of course be explained in physical terms, if we take φρονημάτων in 478 and καρδίας in 782 as expressing the emotion which causes the Erinyes to blight Attica and 830 as metaphorical. But both alone and more especially when taken together with 858 ff. these passages do

[13] Cf. (in the context of the Peloponnesian invasions of Attica in the Archidamian War) Ar. *Ach.* 971–99, *Pax* 562–97, 706–08, 1316–57.

suggest that there is more to the malign power of the Erinyes than a poisonous discharge, and the terms used in 831 seem by their vagueness to look beyond physical wasting.

Thirdly (and, it may be felt, less subjectively), the proposed ambiguity is entirely in line both with the portrayal of the Erinyes in the trilogy as a whole and with Greek conceptions of divine beings. Having watched the all too corporeal vampires pursuing Orestes earlier in *Eumenides* it is easy for the viewer/reader to forget that they have only acquired this role in the last play of the trilogy.[14] With the exception of Apollo's threats to Orestes (*Cho.* 278 ff.), to which I shall return later, and the invisible pursuit of Orestes at the close of *Choephoroi*, wherever the text in the first two plays of the trilogy allows us to discern the mode (and not merely the fact) of the operation of the Erinyes, they are seen overdetermining events,[15] that is, not intervening physically but operating on or through human psychological processes. They are predominantly a force operational within and through the vendetta. In *Eumenides* the balance is altered as the Erinyes become involved in the action in a direct, physical way. This ambiguity (as both physical beings and immanent forces) is entirely in accordance with Greek conceptions of divinity. Thus Aphrodite is a beautiful female, but she is also the reproductive force in human and animal life (e.g. *h. Hom. Aphr.* 2–6, 69–74, Soph. *Ant.* 781–801, *Tr.* 497 f., Eur. *Hipp.* 1268–81). In Euripides' *Hippolytos* Aphrodite is both an anthropomorphic deity jealous of her τιμή (8) and a force at work in Phaidra. The same is true of Dionysos in *Bacchae*. Unlike Aphrodite, Dionysos is visible throughout the play as an anthropomorphic figure who has been offended (23–54); but he is also a power at work within the human mind, as can be seen clearly in the "toilet scene" (912–70), where he both toys with Pentheus from without and possesses him from within (cf. 849–53).

Even in *Eumenides*, despite the move towards direct physical involvement in the action on the part of the Erinyes, there remains some ambiguity about the scope and the nature of their activity. At *Eum.* 210 the chorus is quite explicit about its function. The Erinyes pursue those who attack their mother. Quizzed by Apollo, they insist that they would not intervene in the case of a woman who kills her husband because this does not involve kindred slaughter (212). They identify themselves in 417 as "curses" ('Αραί), that is, embodiments of Klytaimestra's anger. This agrees with the conception of the Erinyes at *Cho.* 283 f., 924, 925, 1054, where it seems that each victim of homicide has his or her own Erinyes.[16] However, at *Eum.* 421 the Erinyes claim that they pursue homicides in general. In

[14] See A. L. Brown, *JHS* 103 (1983) 14.

[15] Cf. *Ag.* 59, 749, 1119, *Cho.* 577, 651; see also *Th.* 70, 723, 791, 886, 977, 988, 1055.

[16] For the Erinyes linked to a specific victim (though not in the context of homicide) cf. also *Th.* 70, 723, 791, 886, 977, 988, 1055 and see K. Reinhardt, *Aischylos als Regisseur und Theologe* (Bern 1949) 154.

the choral odes their role appears to be even broader, since at 269 ff. and 538 ff. they speak of the punishment of wrongs against god, guest or parent. The Erinyes we see in *Eumenides* have a specific function, the punishment of Orestes for the murder of his mother; they are individual beings. At the same time, they represent the principle of the vendetta, which though a crude mechanism for the administration of justice nonetheless reinforces basic rules essential for the survival of society, and it is in the latter capacity that they speak more generally about justice and about duties to god, guest and parent. The nature of their attack is likewise ambiguous. At *Eum.* 264 ff. they are vampires; they will drain Orestes dry of blood and take him down to Hades; in the same spirit they describe their binding song as "a withering of men" (αὐονὰ βροτοῖς 333, 346).[17] But they also see their effect as psychological, for they describe their song as inducing madness (329–32, 341–45).

A fourth, and related, argument concerns the similarity between the threats against Orestes in *Choephoroi* and those against Athens in *Eumenides*. At *Cho.* 275 ff. Apollo threatens Orestes, in the event of his failing to punish his father's killers, with punishments which include madness (288 f.) physical disease (279 ff.) and isolation from all human intercourse (289 ff.). That is, unless Orestes avenges his father's murder he is to receive the punishment which would befall the killer.[18] Similarly, at 924–25 he apparently faces the same punishments for failing to avenge his father and for killing his mother. In the former case the punishments are explicitly connected with the Erinyes, in the latter implicitly. The same pattern of transferred anger is seen in *Eumenides*. Having agreed to the trial, the Erinyes have forfeited the right to punish Orestes. But as in *Choephoroi* they must still have a victim. The victim is Athens, the city whose citizens and patron goddess have between them allowed the murderer to go unpunished. The wasting disease (785 λειχήν) is the counterpart of the diseases with which Orestes was threatened (*Cho.* 281 λειχῆνας ἐξέσθοντας ἀρχαίαν φύσιν). The madness of civil strife which (as interpreted by Athene) the Erinyes threaten against Athens (*Eum.* 858–60 σὺ δ' ἐν τόποισι τοῖς ἐμοῖσι μὴ βάλῃς / μήθ' αἱματηρὰς θηγάνας, σπλάγχνων βλάβας / νέων, ἀοίνοις ἐμμανεῖς θυμώμασιν) finds its counterpart in the madness with which Orestes was threatened, and which descends on him at the close of *Choephoroi* (1021 ff.) as a result of his mother's murder.

Thus in perceiving a psychological/metaphorical aspect to the poison of the Erinyes as well as a biological/literal aspect Athene is not introducing an idea which is alien to the immediate context, the play or the trilogy. If as has been argued the passage is genuine, its purpose is clearly to bring out the ambiguity of the choral threats. As well as urging the Erinyes not to

[17] Cf. 138–39.

[18] Cf. A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus Choephori* (Oxford 1986) 116.

destroy Attica, it is Athene's role in this exchange to clarify through trimeters menaces which the chorus expresses through the more suggestive medium of lyric.

The conclusion that 858–66 are genuine, implying as it does an ambivalence to the Erinyes, has consequences for our understanding of the course of events after Orestes' acquittal. Firstly, we are witnessing a widening of the menace presented by the vendetta. In *Agamemnon* the vendetta claims individual victims; by the end of the play however (1530 ff., 1565 ff.) and for the whole of the *Choephoroi* it is the survival of the family which is at issue; in *Eumenides* it is the survival of society as a whole. In *Agamemnon* the Erinyes were associated with stasis within the family (1117–20). In *Eumenides* stasis threatens the whole state.[19] We have already seen the potential for social fragmentation in the system of justice which obtains in the *Oresteia.* Apollo in his first confrontation with the chorus denies that they have a place in civilized society (185 ff.). They belong where justice consists in acts of mutilation. From the exchange which follows it is clear that the Erinyes *are* a threat to order. They profess loyalty only to the mother–son bond (210–21) and ignore the man–wife bond (213 ff.). The narrow loyalty to one vital relationship subverts another, equally valid relationship. This impression of social fragmentation is reinforced by the trial scene, where Apollo in championing the importance of the father subverts the mother–son bond (652 ff., 657 ff.). Though Apollo despises the Erinyes, his idea of loyalty is as limited as theirs. What we have in these passages is not a change in the problem caused by violent retributive justice but a broader perception of the problem. This expanded focus is implicit in the use of gods rather than human beings as the central participants in the play. The issues are seen in general terms as a clash of rights and functions rather than of individuals, and the emphasis is on principles. We see marriage bond set against blood bond, mother–son against father–son relationship. There is inevitably a potential for social disintegration where loyalties are thus reduced to the minimum, and where violent action is the only conceivable response to violence. It is this destructive force which the Erinyes threaten to let loose in Attica.

This broadening of the issues raised by the vendetta finds expression in the image of fluid dripping to the ground. Throughout the trilogy the relentlessness of the bloodshed in the house of Atreus has found expression in the image of blood spilled on the ground which demands fresh blood.[20] Elsewhere in the trilogy this image relates to the individual or the family,

[19] Cf. A. Lebeck, *The Oresteia: A Study in Language and Structure* (Cambridge, MA 1971) 87.

[20] Cf. *Ag.* 1019–21, 1509–12, *Cho.* 48, 66–67, 400–04, 520 f., *Eum.* 261–63, 647–48. For the connection between the flow of blood and the flow of poison cf. Lebeck (previous note) 87 f.

but in *Eumenides* the poison which drips from the Erinyes threatens the whole of society; it is an imperative to kill operating throughout the state[21] rather than within the confines of one family.

A second consequence concerns the nature of the confrontation between Athene and the Erinyes. From the transference of their anger from Orestes to Athene and Athens it is clear that the Erinyes have not abandoned their commitment to revenge in its crudest form. They have simply exchanged one victim for another. This is as one would expect. The audience has seen the chorus pursue Orestes relentlessly, denying that even death brings any release for their victim.[22] It is incredible that they would blandly accept the acquittal of their victim. However, this relentless pursuit of violent revenge is not merely an aspect of the Erinyes as corporeal beings, nor is it new to *Eumenides*. The impression of relentless and inescapable destruction is present in the two preceding plays as an aspect of the system of justice through which the Erinyes exert their influence in human life.[23] If the Erinyes remain an immanent force in human conduct in the confrontation with Athene, the crisis engendered by the acquittal of Orestes concerns more than the wrath of these vengeful creatures whose τιμή has been curtailed. This crisis has another aspect. The founding of the Areiopagos has solved only the specific problem of Orestes; it has not put an end to the principle of violent, unreflecting retributive justice which the Erinyes represent. The persuasion of the Erinyes by Athene is thus a vital counterpart to her foundation of the Areiopagos. Athene must induce the force which previously had operated through the vendetta to operate through the court which enshrines the positive principles which are at work in the vendetta.[24] It is important however to bear in mind that this force works through human decisions. The Erinyes are therefore used to express an important truth relating not to the gods but to mankind; here as elsewhere in Aischylos divine intervention is used to describe a phenomenon recognizable in human life.[25] It is a fact of life that in a free society an institution comes into being or survives only with the agreement of those subjected to its authority. This is why Athene's persuasion is necessary. The founding of a lawcourt to settle violent disputes does not in itself put an end to violence; this can only happen when those with a grievance accept the right of a court to decide the issue irrespective of whether the decision is in their favour. Aischylos could have enacted this development in purely human terms, by having Orestes prosecuted by a mortal.[26] But the universal significance of

[21] The connection of stasis with the vendetta is indicated by ἀντιφόνους 982.

[22] Cf. 267–68, 339–40.

[23] *Ag.* 1117, 1186, 1479–80, 1484, 1530–34, 1565–66, *Cho.* 400–04, 1065–76.

[24] For this aspect of the confrontation cf. A. J. Podlecki, *The Political Background of Aeschylean Tragedy* (Ann Arbor 1966) 77 f., and for the Areiopagos as enshrining the positive principles which underlie the violence of the vendetta cf. 518–30, 690–99.

[25] Cf. P. E. Easterling, *G & R* 20 (1973) 6.

[26] Cf. Brown (above, note 14) 33.

the gesture would be less pointed.[27] By shifting the dispute to the divine plane, and placing the emphasis on the power which inspires violent revenge rather than on the individual human avenger, Aischylos ensures that the act of forgoing revenge will have a universal significance. The use of the Erinyes to represent the revenge imperative enables Aischylos to enact a phase in the development of a whole society within the limitations of the Greek theatre.[28] He expresses this phase in a typically Greek way, not in evolutionary terms but through the concept of the πρῶτος εὑρέτης, and he makes this πρῶτος εὑρέτης a god, significantly the goddess of wisdom. But within those terms, and within the limits of a scene played out entirely between superhuman powers, Aischylos' representation of this development corresponds to human experience.

Thus the presence or absence of 858–66 affects more than the formal balance of a single scene or the fluency of a single speech. It affects the nature of the danger presented by the Erinyes and the nature of the process which Aischylos is seeking to represent in the confrontation between Athene and the Erinyes. If the verses are genuine, then we see in the scene following the acquittal of Orestes the centrifugal force of the vendetta, which has divided and nearly destroyed the house of Atreus, threaten to divide and destroy Attica through stasis generated by mutual acts of violent revenge. The imperative to take life for life still operates. Through the medium of the Erinyes, the embodiment of the revenge principle, Aischylos enacts the agreement of mankind, previously bound by this imperative, to accept the transfer of the right to punish to a state-appointed tribunal and forgo the claim to violent action, with the result that punishment no longer provokes further violence. The result is a more cohesive society in which violence is both deterred and (where it does erupt) contained; aggression can therefore be directed outward to the benefit of the state rather than inward to its destruction.[29] The climax of *Eumenides* is not therefore, as is sometimes

[27] Likewise, Euripides could have presented *Hippolytos* entirely in empirical (human) terms, without recourse to Aphrodite and Artemis at beginning and end; the play would lose nothing in psychological plausibility, but it would not provide the same impression of universal and insuperable forces at work, nor the irresolvable clash of values.

[28] Brown (above, note 14) 34 suggests that by presenting a solution on the divine plane Aischylos evades the difficulties presented by the irresolvable conflict witnessed throughout the trilogy. If we are correct in seeing the Erinyes as (in part) an aspect of human behaviour Aischylos does not evade the issue but rather transcends the physical limitations of his theatre. There is an excellent parallel in *Agamemnon*, where the act of walking on precious fabrics is used to express the essence of Agamemnon's conduct within the physical limits of the theatre; the single act encapsulates crimes separated in time and space and perpetrated on a scale beyond the resources of the theatre of Dionysos.

[29] Cf. 864, 986. Despite the change from menace to benediction on the part of the Erinyes, it is clear from Athene's comments at 930–37 (cf. 310 f., 367 f., 561) that the Erinyes have not changed their nature. They are still a source of dread (as in 518 ff.) and therefore a deterrent against wrongdoing; but now that the mechanics of their intervention have changed at the physical level (from direct action by the aggrieved party to punishment by a tribunal) the

erroneously stated,[30] the acquittal of Orestes. It is the persuasion of the Erinyes; for this is the action which will determine the future of Athens, and indeed of the human race.[31]

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administration of justice ceases to be a destabilizing force. The stable society which results can channel violence against the external enemy.

[30] Cf. T. G. Rosenmeyer, *The Art of Aeschylus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1982) 349: "Athene's position as reconciler and innovator means that the Furies are merely hanging on to prolong the tensions of the play a little longer, rather than opening another valid round of conflict."

[31] I wish to thank Dr. Malcolm Campbell of St. Andrews and Dr. Alex Garvie of the University of Glasgow for reading and commenting on an earlier draft of this paper.